



The Compassionate Friends

Lehigh Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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July

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Chapter 1562

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Our Mission: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

You're Invited

The Lehigh Valley chapter meets at Bethany Wesleyan Church, Dining Room, Cherryville, PA, the second Monday of the month at 7pm

Our support group meetings are open to all bereaved parents, grandparents and mature siblings. Group participation is confidential and voluntary.

For information about meetings, directions to our meeting space or to be added to the meeting text reminder list call or text 484-891-0823

Note: For the safety of all attendees

- Please do not attend if you feel ill, were exposed to Covid, the Flu, or tested positive in the last 14 days

Next Meeting Monday, July 8

Note: Meeting Cancellations will be posted on the chapter Facebook page and a text sent to all on the meeting notification text list.

To Our New Members

Making the decision to come to your first meeting can be difficult. It can also be difficult to return for a second or third meeting, but we ask that you attend three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF will work for you. We cannot walk your grief journey for you, but we can walk beside you if you allow us to. We have no easy answers or quick fixes, but we care, share and understand. Although our circumstances may be different, we have all "been there"...we are all grieving the loss of a child and therefore we can truly say we understand. You are not alone.

Telephone Friends

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who cares and understands between meetings. To help we maintain a list of telephone friends. During these times the following members are available to listen, share and offer what support they can.

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Infant Loss - Kim Szep - | 610-730-3111 |
| Only Child - Shelly Garst - | 484-241-5396 |
| Addiction - Nancy Howe - | 484-863-4324 |
| Homicide - Ginger Renner - | 610-967-5113 |

To volunteer as a telephone friend contact the newsletter editor



TCF National Support Resources

The TCF National website has over 35 private Facebook pages and a number of moderated chatrooms. To register for the FB pages or chat rooms go to www.compassionatefriends.org and click on the find support tab and then choose online communities.

Newsletter Notes

This Newsletter comes to you courtesy of The Compassionate Friends, Lehigh Valley Chapter. We hope that it will be of some comfort to you on your grief journey.

We welcome original stories and poetry

All submissions must include the author's name and your contact information. Send to the newsletter editor

If you move please contact the Newsletter Editor with your new address

Newsletter Editor Contact

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Bread Crumbs

Finding Our Way Back

Bread crumbs are all we have. They are what is left behind after the death of our child. They are our memories and our mementos.

A bread crumb is the little answering machine cassette tape that says "Hi, it's me. Leave a message at the beep." We may be the only people with a cassette tape in our safe deposit box. It's not much, a few quick words, but it's his voice - a small crumb from the original.

A bread crumb is his favorite shirt that I still can't part with, so I wear it for good luck on special days. A bread crumb is the last Father's Day card he wrote in his own hand before he went off to college.

Thanks for everything Dad, especially the \$. My years at home were better than words can say and I never took anything for granted. I've had the best childhood anyone could have. Thank you for the ideas and opportunities I grew up with. I love you.

Mark

I call these things crumbs because they are a disappointing piece of the real thing, but treasured because they are all we have.

I also think there is a second way of looking at this. Bread crumbs are a part of children's stories symbolizing signposts along the way to help lead us out of the forest - to find our way back to the land of the living, at least if the birds don't eat them.

I like to think that the return from grief is like finding our way out of the forest. The way is marked by great changes or signposts if we will only follow the bread crumbs. I think of them as gifts left behind by our children. They change us and they lead us out of the forest - but at a very different place than we first went in. Here are three I have found, maybe you will find others.

Crumb One

We pick up a new sense of what is important and what is not. We suffer fools, superficial cocktail parties, and convenience friends poorly. We seem to develop an immediate impatience for the meaningless and the trivial. On the other hand, we pick up an incredible sensitivity to the world around us that we did not have before. We watch the news differently. We value people more than things. We live more in the moment and less in the future because we know that sometimes "tomorrow" doesn't come.

Crumb Two

We find our real self on the road back. After the loss of a child and a

Our Children Remembered

Please keep the parents, grandparents and siblings of the following children in your thoughts and hearts

Birthdays and Anniversaries

| | Birth | Anniv. |
|--|--------|--------|
| Scott Arcury - Son of Frank and Beth Arcury; Brother of Lauren Arcury | Mar 6 | Jul 24 |
| Hunter Bremmer - Son of David Bremmer; Brother of Heather Bremmer | Dec 12 | Jul 27 |
| Courtney Daud - Daughter of Marie Daud | Jul 15 | Jul 15 |
| Sarah Davidson - Daughter of Dean and Donna Davidson; Sister of Nicholas Davidson | Jul 10 | Jul 10 |
| Mark Dilts, Jr - Son of Mark and Joy Dilts; Brother of Beth Dilts | Jan 6 | Jul 8 |
| Connor Dugan - Son of George and Holly Dugan | Jul 17 | Dec 24 |
| Sgt. Christopher Geiger - Son of George and Patricia Geiger; Brother of Roseanne Reenock, Michael, Terrance, David & Timothy Geiger | Mar 30 | Jul 9 |
| Eric Graver - Son of Mary L Graver | Aug 17 | Jul 9 |
| Chase Groeger - Brother of Daisha Hamilton | Nov 23 | Jul 16 |
| James "Jimmy" Hotz - Son of Elizabeth Hotz | Apr 24 | Jul 4 |
| Colleen Kilker - Daughter of Mark and Kathleen Kilker; Sister of Meghan, Bridget and Mark Kilker | May 6 | Jul 23 |
| David Kunsman - Son of Charles and Joan Kunsman; Brother of Sherry Flanagan, Sandra Kunsman, the late Walter Alfonso & the late Charles Kunsman, Jr | May 2 | Jul 15 |
| John Leonard, Jr - Son of Jack and Jule Leonard; Brother of Karen | Jul 27 | Jan 6 |
| Carter Mayer - Son of Ashley Mowrey | Jul 13 | Aug 20 |
| Ed McNally - Son of Don and Connie McNally; Brother of Sean McNally | Jul 29 | Feb 11 |
| Alexander Price - Son of Anthony and Jenny Price; Brother of Adam & Chole | Jul 17 | Jul 9 |
| Peter Radocha - Son of Lucille Radocha; Brother of Gina Sacco & Frank Radocha, Jr | Jun 13 | Jul 1 |
| Robert Rute - Son of Linda Cavanaugh | Jul 9 | Apr 4 |
| Elliot Senseman - Son of Heather Lyons | Aug 17 | Jul 27 |
| Jessica Smolenski - Daughter of Thomas and Pamela Smolenski | Nov 3 | Jul 6 |
| Zackary Stokes - Son of Pam and Duane Stokes | Aug 8 | Jul 2 |
| Paul Woodling - Son of Gregg and Mary Ann Miller | Jul 21 | Nov 5 |



Love Gifts



Love Gifts enable us to reach out to newly bereaved and provide ongoing support to all members.

They may be given in memory of a child or in memory or in honor of a friend or relative. Gifts are tax deductible.

| Contributor | Loved One |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| ♥ | <i>No Love Gifts this month</i> |

Donations & Contributions

★ **Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, PA**
For our meeting space

★ **Giant Food Store Employees United Way Contributions**
In Memory of David Todd Smith

★ **Aetna Payroll Contributors**
★ **United Way Payroll Contributors**

★ **The Matt Kush Foundation**
In Memory of Matt Kush

Continued from page 2

period of emptiness, we do eventually come back. But we come back differently - and I believe better - than the person that entered the awful forest. With our new understanding of priorities, we listen again to "that still small voice" that we silenced in the race to climb the career ladder or have the "perfect life" or do what our parents or teachers thought we "should" do. We find new courage to be the person we really are.

We begin living from the inside out instead of the other way around. From a sense of what is important, not what is expected. From a life of what's in it for me?" to "how can I help you?" We discover new and compassionate friends, and sometimes drift away from old ones. We go from a thousand name Rolodex of contacts to a handful of people we love.

We often also find our spiritual center and an inner peace. We become unafraid to die, at the same time we are beginning to live again.

Crumb Three

We pick up one more gift that I have noticed. We seem to get anointed with an ability to help someone else. You know what I mean. We didn't want it. We didn't ask for it. But we got it, anyway. It's almost like a giant invisible radar screen gets mounted on our head and we now pick up vibrations from other people in need. And we find that we really can help. People seek us out. People who don't know what to say when a child dies call us and ask: "Could you please go over?" We know we can and will, if only to listen.

I am reminded of the story of a little boy who arrived home late from school. "Where have you been?" his mother asked. "I was helping Timmy who broke his bike," the child answered. "But Honey," the mother said, "You don't even know how to fix a bike." "I know Mom," came the reply, "But I was just helping him cry."

Sometimes we can just help someone else cry, and that is enough. Unlike most other people, we

can walk directly up to a bereaved parent or sibling, look them in the eye, and say "I know how you feel." That is what TCF is all about. And in helping another person we help ourselves heal too.

So what do we do with these new gifts or bread crumbs left along the way for us? New priorities. A new sense of self. And the ability to help someone else.

These are definitely good things. They did not come *from* the death of our child. Nothing good comes from the death of a child. As Rabbi Harold Kushner said in Seattle: "there is no silver lining." but there is change. These changes come after the death, when we recognize that we can't change what happened, but we can change what we do about it.

One day our surviving son, Rick, put his arms around us in a family hug and said: "Okay Mom and Dad, now that we are a family of three instead of four, we each have to live our lives one-third better." That, more than any other moment in our grief marked our turning point.

My wife has a reoccurring dream. She is in Heaven many years from now and she greets our son. "Okay, Mom," Mark says, "So tell me everything you did after I died?" On that day she will be proud to answer: "I lived the rest of my life one third better in your name."

I suspect most bereaved parents divide their lives into those two distinct stages of time: before and after the death. What we do in Stage Two we do in our child's name.

And because we do it, the world after our child died in some small way is changed forever. And when the world in some small way is changed forever, then our child's life continues to make a difference.

And when our child's life continues to make a difference, he or she is never entirely gone.

*Richard Edler,
South Bay LA, CA Chapter*



Three Stars

I'm always stunned at how ignorant I was about losing a child before we lost our son. I knew a parent would feel sad and would always miss their child, but, I had no concept of how it just rips your heart out and how you actually feel as though you've died yourself ... on the inside. No idea of how you just go through the motions of living because you don't have any other choice ... of how you actually stop living yourself for so long. No idea of how other people have no concept of what's going on in our heads and our hearts because we hide it most of the time. No idea of how all that pain can just resurface so easily, triggered by so many little things ... and certainly no idea of how long it takes to even feel any sense of normality in my life.

That ignorance scares me because, if I was like that, then that means that most other people out there are, too. That reinforces one of my fears; that most people will have no idea of how I feel 5 years later and will feel frustrated with me when I am sad or, worse still, will think I'm just dramatizing it all and looking for sympathy.

I so desperately want the pain to go away. I'd be very happy to just live with the sadness and the missing and never have to experience these terrible, "unmanageable" days again! If there was a magic pill to do that, I'd be at the front of the line to take it ... but here isn't Thank goodness those days are now further apart and not quite as severe! Time is our like a "slow-release magic pill."

Maybe its just that we are like a cup brimming full with grief and any incident like dropping a pebble in that cup and it just overflows ... some things are like dropping a big rock in and the overflow is huge!

The closest thing we've found to a "magic pill" is to spend time with other bereaved parents ... other people who really understand where we are coming from, other people who can really "share the experience" with us. That is why we find the Compassionate Friends is like taking our magic pill and the effects are immediate and long lasting! At our last Compassionate Friends weekend we had to write down 3 things that made out child a "star" to us and then 2 things that they would want for us now.

The first three things that came into my head about Nic were:

1. His affection ... always giving hugs to his family

even though he was a cool 12 year old (Because I was lucky enough to be his mom I got a hug every day.) Most kids that age avoided hugs.

2. His self-confidence ... he believed in his own ideas and stuck by them regardless of what other people said of thought of them.

3. His loyalty ... to his family and his friends. He was fiercely protective and proud and stuck by all of us through everything.

I also wanted to include his crazy nature ... willing to have a go at anything, his sense of fun and being on the go all the time but I was only allowed three stars ... I could have filled up dozens!!! Every parent in our group said the same thing ... we need more stars! What would you write about your child?

The two things he would want for us now were:

1. To keep our family and lifestyle going. He loved it and would be devastated if he thought his death had tom our family apart or had destroyed the fun we all had together.

2. To be who we were when he was here ... to have fun in life and to live for him now...instead of with him.

I keep trying to focus on those thoughts and keep working towards them. He would be happy to see us doing those things...I just wonder if he knows how hard this is at times.

Judy Fisher, TCF NSW, AUS



We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

~Maya Angelo



“And the rockets’ red glare”

I watched the spectacular burst of colors.
 It was always such a treat.
 The starburst, the swirly ones,
 the straight ones,
 making their noisy, hissing,
 banging trajectories into the nighttime sky.

Throughout these exciting displays,
 tears rolled down my face. Inconceivable,
 that I am here to enjoy this and you, my
 beautiful Cheryl, are not.

Then new thoughts rolled through my mind.
 Perhaps you are viewing these fireworks and
 many more from a higher vantage point,
 where the colors
 and designs shine more vividly.

Perhaps you are seeing and
 understanding things that I can neither see
 nor understand. Perhaps your world is filled
 with rainbows and flowers and butterflies,
 rabbits and other beautiful animals
 that wander free.

Perhaps you are surrounded by love,
 music, beauty, and unbounded joy.

Perhaps, my love, I can only hope.

Carol Silverman, Elkins Park, PA

Footprints in the Sand

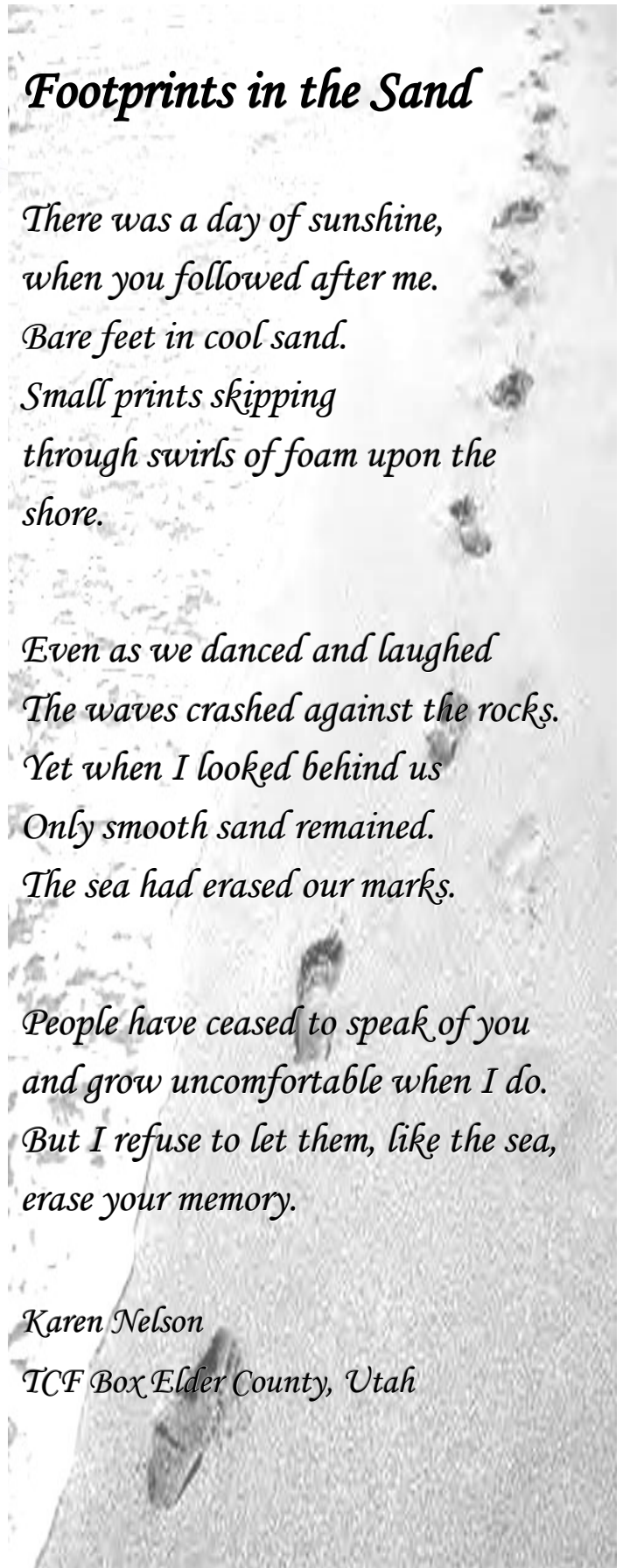
*There was a day of sunshine,
 when you followed after me.
 Bare feet in cool sand.
 Small prints skipping
 through swirls of foam upon the
 shore.*

*Even as we danced and laughed
 The waves crashed against the rocks.
 Yet when I looked behind us
 Only smooth sand remained.
 The sea had erased our marks.*

*People have ceased to speak of you
 and grow uncomfortable when I do.
 But I refuse to let them, like the sea,
 erase your memory.*

Karen Nelson

TCF Box Elder County, Utah



Sibling Page

Teenage Grief The Subject of Anger

Expressing anger is not something that most of us are given permission to do while growing up. We are often told to go to our room or calm down. We buy the message that anger is inappropriate and are seldom given examples of how to vent anger in a way that does not hurt someone else or ourselves.

Anger is a very human response to grief. We may be angry at ourselves, the doctor, God, or friends who have family members that we no longer have. We may even be mad at our loved one for dying and leaving us alone to deal with life without them.

It has been said that depression is often a result of anger turned inward. If we intellectualize or minimize our anger, it will not go away by itself. Our suppressed anger may find an avenue of expression through constant fatigue, continuous physical ailments or outbursts of anger and frustration in situations that appear to be unrelated to the death.

Some people have found that anger can be safely expressed in the following ways:

- Writing an angry letter and tearing it up. Screaming into a pillow. Punching a pillow or mattress. Scribbling with a red crayon. Exercise - running, bicycling or boxing.
- While doing the above, verbalize either Out loud or silently, the anger you are feeling. Verbalizing is an effective way of focusing your anger where it belongs.
- Journalism or drawing can also release anger. At the top of a sheet of paper, you might want to write, "I am angry because.." and respond to this question with short sentences or sketches.

If you are not feeling anger at this time, respect that.

There is not a magic formula that says you *have* to be angry while grieving. Anger is simply a common and frequent response to grief for many people.

Follow your own heart and allow yourself to grieve in your own way and on your own time.

Linda Cunningham

One More Day

If I were granted one more day
To spend alone with you,
I'd say the things I should have said
And do all I wanted to do.

I'd tell you that I love you.
Did I tell you that before?
Or did I just take it for granted
That you'd always walk through the door?

I'd play all the games you asked me to play
But I was too busy, you see.
I'm sorry for the times I wasn't there,
Now, I wish you were here for me.

I'd tell you I miss you so very much.
You've been gone forever, it seems,
And I still hope that one of these days
I'll wake from this terrible dream.

If one more day were given to me
To tell you the things I'd say,
The only thing I'd want after that,
Would be just one more day.

Crystal Gibb, Bereavement Magazine, Jan 1991

Did you know that The
Compassionate Friends hosts a
chatroom and a facebook page
just for bereaved siblings?

To join go to
www.compassionatefriends.org &
click on the "Find Support". There
you will find options for
moderated chatrooms and private
facebook pages.



The Compassionate Friends Credo Copyright © 2007

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.

Other Local TCF Chapters & Support Groups

TCF Carbon County - 484-719-6753

TCF Easton - 610-515-3526

TCF Quakertown - 267-379-0429

GRASP (grief recovery after substance passing)

TCF Pocono - 570 - 350 - 6695

(484) 788-9440

Love Gift Form

Your love gift will help defray the cost of chapter expenses such as the newsletter mailings, meetings and our outreach to the newly bereaved. The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible.

Deadlines are the 1st of the month previous to the month you wish publication in. Example the deadline for publication in January is December the 1st

Contributor Name *(this will be the name that appears in the newsletter)*

Mail Love Gifts to:

Address

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, LEHIGH VALLEY
C/O BRENDA SOLDERITCH
415 S. HOKENDAUQUA DR
NORTHAMPTON, PA 18067

Phone

Email Address

I would like to make a donation of _____ In Memory of In Honor of A Chapter Gift *(without memorial or honorarium)*

Name of person gift given for

Edition to be published in. *Deadlines listed above. Late submissions or those that do not indicate an edition will be published in the next edition.*

Special Text - Brief Messages Please. *Poems & story submissions are always welcome and should be sent directly to the Newsletter Editor for inclusion in the newsletter.*

Please designate which of the following your gift is for (you may circle more than one)

Newsletter Expenses

Postage

Office Expenses

Outreach Program

Special Events